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REFUGEES

W. 8816

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FROM Mr. J.G.Hibbert.  
Colonial Office.

No. 7031/1/39

Dated 3rd June, 1939.

Received in Registry } 6th June, 1939.

W : Refugees.

Settlement of Jewish refugees in Socotra.

Transmits copy of letter dated 3rd June to Mr. Brooks, Treasury, enclosing copy of correspondence from Sir Bernard Reilly, Aden, and Mr. W.H.Ingrams, British Resident Adviser at Mukalla, showing that Jewish refugee settlement in Socotra is quite impracticable, together with copies of letters dated 2nd June to Lord Hailey, Sir H. Emerson and Mr. A. de Rothschild.

**Last Paper.**

(Minutes.)

W 8806 (W 7454)

**References.**

W 7454

(Print.)

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Eastern Dept

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(Index.)

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**Next Paper.**

W 8817

7031/1/39 Part II.

3 June, 1939.

*Dear Sir,*

25.4.39.

With reference to my letter of the 5th May about Socotra, I enclose for Lord Winterton's information a copy of the letter which Sir John Shuckburgh has received from Sir Bernard Reilly, together with a copy of the letter from Mr. Ingrams, the British Resident Adviser at Mukalla, to which reference is made in it.

It is evident that Jewish refugee settlement in Socotra is quite impracticable.

2.6.39.

Copies of the enclosures in this letter are being sent to Lord Hailey and Sir Herbert Emerson for their own information (and also to Reilly at the Foreign Office), but not to Mr. Anthony de Rothschild. I enclose copies of the letters as sent to Lord Hailey and Sir Herbert Emerson, and to Mr. de Rothschild.



J. G. HIBBERT.

H.E. BROOKS, ESQ.

CONFIDENTIAL.

No. Pc/833.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

ADEN.

25 April 1939.

My dear Shuckburgh,

Will you please refer to your confidential letter of March 23rd and my reply to it of April 12th? I have now received a reply from Ingrams, and I enclose a copy of it. As you will see, he considers that the settlement of Jews in Socotra is impracticable, and that, even if it were possible, it would do far more harm than good. I entirely agree with him, and my reply to your enquiry must therefore be (as anticipated in my previous letter to you) decidedly in the negative.

My opinion is not altered by the note from the Secretary of the Emigration (Planning) Joint Sub-Committee of the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees, of which you have enclosed a copy in your confidential letter of April 13th. In this note the objections are classed under (a) moral (b) political and (c) economic, and under (a) it is stated that the Sultan of Qishn and Socotra might reasonably be expected to agree to the proposal if the small allowance made to him could be increased, and if he realises that his revenue might be augmented and were given a guarantee that the Moslem religion would remain the religion of his State. This assumption is based on a complete misunderstanding of the mentality of Arabs towards the Jewish question. They object to

Sir John Shuckburgh, K.C.M.G., C.B.

Colonial Office.

to Jewish colonisation in Arabia on religious grounds, which to them are paramount, and no offers of material gain carry the slightest weight with them in a matter of this sort. Jewish immigration will not therefore be accepted willingly by any Chief or tribe in the Aden Protectorate, and its enforcement in any part of the Protectorate will be fatal to the reputation of the British Government in it and to the political work that is at present being carried on by Political Officers here with some degree of success. We are attempting pacification and development of this territory, and we have repeatedly assured the Arab inhabitants of the country that we are doing so in their interests. If we ever give them grounds for suspicion that we are actuated, even in part, by a design to introduce an alien immigration, their confidence in us will be destroyed, and this will especially be the case if the suggested immigration be that which they dread most of all, namely a Jewish one. Far from countering Italian criticism of our treatment of the Protectorate, such a policy would give an unfriendly foreign power the strongest possible argument for undermining Arab loyalty to the British connection. With regard to the economic possibilities of Socotra I agree that they may repay further investigation, but this investigation, if made, should be conducted in the interests of the inhabitants, and not in those of foreign colonists.

I therefore wish to record my emphatic opinion that any idea of settling Jews either in Socotra or in any other part of the Protectorate should be completely ruled out.

I may add that a rumour is now prevalent in Aden and the Aden Protectorate and the Yemen, and has also appeared in the Egyptian press, that the British Government are contemplating Jewish settlement on a large scale in the Hadhramaut. In spite of the fantastic nature of this story it may do much harm among credulous people, and I am taking steps to deny it categorically, and I am also trying to discover how it can have originated. Suggestions of this nature are more calculated than any other form of anti-British propaganda to rouse hostility to Great Britain in this part of the world, and I consider that everything possible should be done to prevent them.

Yours sincerely,

(sd.) B.R. REILLY.

THE RESIDENCY,  
MUKALLA.

15th April 1939.

My dear Sir Bernard,

In answer to your confidential letter No.C/721 of the 12th April about the settlement of Jews in Socotra, I write to say that I agree that the suggestion is quite impracticable.

Personally I believe that as Socotra is sparsely inhabited and has natural resources which the present population will never develop, it would be possible usefully to settle non-Europeans on it and that in time the objections which the locals would at first raise could be overcome and that the arrangement would benefit them.

But practically, even if you overcome all the local political and natural difficulties of the kind mentioned in your letter, I am certain that European Jews could never survive on the island as settlers. It is said that Alexander's Greeks did, but I simply cannot picture refugees of the kind contemplated on that island in a Socotran summer.

Be that as it may, the overwhelming objection to my mind is the wider political one. Even if you forced Jews on the Socotrans the repercussions elsewhere would be such that I believe you might have to leave the whole of the rest of the Protectorate, unless you were prepared to put large forces in it (and they would have to be largely ground forces) and I should think it is pretty certain that Socotra on top of Palestine would about finish us with the rest of the Arabs.

Yesterday,

Yesterday, being Friday, we went out to Fuwa to lunch with H.H. and raised the question of the Jews. I think he had a genuine sympathy with their plight. I then said, where were they to go and it was a pity they could not go to Socotra. He said no one would much mind what happened to the Socotrans, but the Arab reactions would be much as I have said above. He said if only they were Christians and not Jews there would be no real trouble.

It is unfortunate, but I believe and I expect you do too, that the good you might do by putting even a thousand or two Jews on Socotra (if it were practical), would be far outweighed by the trouble you would stir up elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) W.H. INGRAMS.

Sir Bernard Reilly, K.C.M.G., C.I.E., O.B.E.,  
Government House,  
Aden.

CONFIDENTIAL.

2nd June, 1939.

Dear Lord Hailey  
Sir Herbert,

The possibilities of Socotra as a territory in which a small number of refugees might possibly be settled has been raised on one or two occasions by various people, including Mr. Anthony de Rothschild, and we recently wrote to the Governor of Aden for his views on the subject.

.6.39.

I enclose for your information a copy of a letter which I have written to Mr. de Rothschild after receiving the Governor's reply. I have not sent him a copy of the letter I actually received from Sir Bernard Reilly, because I do not think it would be advisable for this to be circulated to the members of the Emigration (Planning) Joint Sub-Committee, and I hardly like to suggest to Mr. de Rothschild that he should not do so. I am sending you, however, copies of Sir Bernard Reilly's letter and the letter from Mr. Ingrams (the British Resident Adviser at Mukalla)

25.4.39.

enclosed

1. THE LORD HAILEY, G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E.
2. SIR HERBERT EMERSON, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., C.B.E.

enclosed in it, for your own information; and I am  
writing similarly to Sir Herbert Emerson.  
Lord Hailey.

*Yours sincerely,*

*A.C. Parkinson*

CONFIDENTIAL.

2nd June, 1939.

Dear Mr. de Rothschild,

On the 5th May, Hibbert wrote to Finlayson giving the substance of the preliminary reply received by us from the Governor of Aden regarding the possibility of a few refugees being absorbed in Socotra.

I have now received a further letter from Sir Bernard Reilly, who in the meantime has consulted the British Resident Adviser at Mukalla. They both state most emphatically that any Jewish refugee settlement, even on the smallest scale, would be violently opposed by the Arab population in the Aden Protectorate, and might have very serious repercussions.

I am afraid therefore that any possibilities of Jewish settlement offered by this Island must be completely ruled out.

Yours sincerely,  
A.C.C. Parkinson